

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR"

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

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LADY LOVELACE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "JUDITH WYNNE," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER VI.

THE third day after that proved whether or not Ellinor Yorke was a timid rider. On each of the two previous days she had not made her appearance till luncheon; on this day, however, she came downstairs about eleven o'clock, and meeting the squire in the hall, expressed a wish to go through the stables with him.

"Ah, delighted, I am sure, my dear! Come along, Edie," cried the squire, going back a step, and calling to his daughter through a half-opened door.

The Hall stables held a goodly stud—hunters, hacks, carriage and saddle horses—some twelve or fifteen all told. The first five or six Ellinor passed by with scarce a glance. At the sixth she half paused.

"This is the horse I should like to ride," she said; "no, on second thoughts this;" and she laid her hand on the neck of a glossy, straight-limbed roan, with beautiful, if rather restless, eyes, and a good deal of red about the mane and tail.

"Ah, that's Edie's Coquette," said the squire uneasily, not feeling at all sure whether Edie's opinion on the matter would coincide with her cousin's. "It's a difficult creature; all right when started, but apt to be skittish at being mounted."

"All the same, it's the one I should like to ride," said Ellinor with great decision and a look right into the squire's eyes which made opposition all the more difficult.

The squire turned appealingly to Edie.

"Ellinor would like to ride Coquette, my dear," he said hesitatingly.

"How ill-tempered I must be growing," thought Edie; "why, a week ago I would have lent Coquette to anyone who asked

me politely, but now!" and she mentally shrugged her shoulders at herself, and curled her upper-lip.

It was only a moment's pause; then she said aloud, a little ungraciously it must be owned:

"Oh, Ellinor is quite welcome to do so—that is, if she can." The last clause was added sotto voce.

"Thanks, little Edie," said Ellinor, with that sweet smile of hers which always made Edie feel as though she were composed of tinder, and a match were being applied to her.

When the horses were brought round, Ellinor soon showed what she could and would do.

Coquette was a splendid little blood-mare, all right when set going, but, as the squire had said, hard to start. She had two or three inveterately bad habits which Edie had made no effort to break her of, in fact, had rather encouraged than otherwise, telling the pretty, whimsical creature that she was true to her name and nature—nothing more. When she felt Ellinor's hand on her neck she started, snorted violently, and threw back her shapely head; when she felt a new rider on her back, and the man had let go her head, she reared till she nearly sat upon her haunches, then plunged forward just as vigorously, and finally set off at an altogether startling speed down the avenue, and out into the road beyond.

"For Heaven's sake, my dear, be careful!" shouted the squire as he set off at a rattling pace after the young lady.

The south wind brought back Ellinor's reply clear and distinct enough:

"She has not been properly managed—I would break her of this in a week."

Edie felt as though a lump were rising in her throat. "Had not been properly managed!" Well, then, by inference, she

Eddie Fairfax, who had ridden ever since she got out of her high-chair, did not know how to manage a horse; why not tell her at once she could not walk, talk, read, nor write? As well say that as that she could not ride. Of course she did not pretend to think for a moment that she sat her horse as Ellinor sat hers; Ellinor, of course, did everything better than other people. There was also something different in the cut of her habit, the shape of her gauntlet, the way she held her elbows; no doubt she caused a sensation in the Row every time she went out riding.

Now Eddie had never once troubled the Row with her presence. Although for the past ten years she had gone regularly every season to London with her father "to do the theatres and that sort of thing," she had carefully eschewed the Park, naturally enough considering the riding to be had there a mere travesty of the delightful canter she was accustomed to over the Berkshire heaths and hills; but, nevertheless, she felt it would be as true to say she could not breathe as could not ride. Why, she could not live without a horse to pet and fondle, and tease and talk to! They never gave themselves airs of superiority, or wounded people's feelings as—as some human beings did. Here a big tear fell into the mane of the chestnut she was riding; she slackened speed, leaving her father and Ellinor to go ahead at their will.

At Wickham Place they came upon the Colonel and Phil starting for a morning ride.

The squire reduced his pace; he had been going thus rapidly in order to keep up with Ellinor, not feeling at all sure of Coquette's behaviour under her new rider.

"Well, Colonel," he shouted, "what's the latest thing in figures you've accomplished? Have you found out what reduction in oat-fields may be expected in ten years' time if bicycles continue to increase upon us at their present rate? You must know," he added, turning to Ellinor, "Colonel Wickham here is as great at reckoning and calculating as the Yankees themselves—I can't say more."

Ellinor smiled round graciously at the Colonel. He naturally enough rode up to her side. They soon fell into light talk. Possibly he thought to himself: "I am more likely to be young-lady-proof than Phil. Eddie would have been wiser not to have slackened her hold on him just now."

Phil waited behind for Eddie.

She came along at a snail's pace, her

eyes a little downcast, her lips a little tremulous. She felt ruffled and put out with the universe generally; with a few persons particularly. With Ellinor for her altogether superior ways; with herself for being inclined to cry instead of laugh over them. With Phil, even, for pulling up his horse to wait for her instead of riding on with the rest. Had he forgotten already what she had said to him such a little while ago? Did he mean to behave just as though they were still engaged, and were bound to walk, talk, ride with each other, and no one else? It was altogether ridiculous of him! she would take care and show him what she thought of his conduct. So she said till she came up with him, and then, somehow, all in a flash, her ill-temper seemed to vanish, and her usual bright smile came back at his very first words.

"How now, Eddie?" he cried. "What has poor Coquette done to be punished in this way? You know how she hates a new rider; you know no one ever manages her as you do."

Eddie, brightening more and more, felt as though she must tell him all her troubles.

"She can't hate a new rider more than I hate a new visitor. Oh, Phil, I am quite ashamed of myself, but I have been wishing and wishing all the morning that Ellinor had never come into the house. I didn't know quite why I sighed when I first told you she was coming, but somehow I felt as though she would upset everything, and she has."

"And I wish, too, she had never come into the house since she upsets you so much, dear," answered Phil. "But why allow it? Why take things so much to heart—why not laugh them off as you generally do laugh off annoyances?"

"Oh, but she says and does things that one can't laugh off very well, and always with such an air of superiority, one feels oneself to be the culprit, not she. Of course, she is a lady—I know that, but—well, yes, of course, she is a lady; her father was Colonel Yorke (he died out in Afghanistan, you know); her mother was a Fairfax."

"And, therefore, a lady. But, lady or not, I'll tell you one thing she is, Eddie, and that is a most dangerous woman!"

Eddie felt triumphantly glad to hear Phil say this. She did not intend, however, to let him see her gladness.

"Now, Phil, I really think you are going too far. What can you know of Ellinor to speak of her in this way?"

According to your own showing, you did not meet her half-a-dozen times in London, scarcely spoke half-a-dozen words to her. Yet anyone to see your face when you called her a dangerous woman just now, would have vowed you were afraid—positively afraid of her.”

Edie said all this slyly, demurely, playfully enough. There was nothing in life she enjoyed more than a right-down, good argument with Phil. Let him take the one side in any matter, small or great, and she was nearly certain to take the other.

But Phil answered gravely and straightforwardly at once, as in a matter that did not admit of playfulness :

“So I am afraid of her—downright afraid of her, Edie; I won’t attempt to deny it. I am as afraid of her, with her beauty, her talent, her grace, as I should be of any lunatic who was allowed to go about with a firebrand or loaded gun among unarmed or defenceless people. If I had my way with such women as Ellinor Yorke, I would—well, never mind what I would do; I am not likely to be able to do it.”

“Oh, Phil, and after the way you looked at her the other night when she sang! Why, you looked, and looked, and looked, as though you would look away your soul!” exclaimed Edie, still bent on teasing.

Phil answered even more gravely than before :

“A man’s eyes may be fascinated, Edie, while his heart remains untouched, and his brain condemns. Don’t you understand?”

“No, I don’t understand,” laughed Edie. “I’m not clever enough to be able to divide you into quarters like an orange, and say this quarter has nothing to do with the other. Come, let’s ride on after the others. Remember, we’re not engaged now, and you’ve no right to monopolise me in this way. I won’t be condemned to your society for the whole morning. And oh, dear darling Phil”—this added very coaxingly, very winningly—“do—do be merciful and take Ellinor Yorke off my hands as much as possible. I know I shall quarrel outright with her before another week is over our heads if she and I have much to do with each other.”

CHAPTER VII.

In the next few days that followed, however, Edie had not the remotest chance of seeing too much of Ellinor; nor had Phil the opportunity for “taking her off Edie’s hands,” for the simple reason that the squire himself performed that duty.

Performed it too, ably, thoroughly, and, if one might venture to say so, as though it were less of a duty than a pleasure to him. Did Miss Yorke desire to walk, ride, or drive, he invariably offered to be her escort; did she choose to sit indoors, he would suggest a comfortable sofa or lounge, and take care that a small table laden with magazines, society journals, or the latest novel from Mudie’s, was ready to her hand. The evenings he seemed specially to revel in. He had a great fondness for *écarté*; Ellinor was a skilful and rapid player; *tête-à-tête* in the library over a small card-table they spent those two after-dinner hours which, truth to tell, had at times hung rather heavily on the squire’s hands.

Edie began to feel herself somewhat forgotten and ignored.

“Really,” she said to Phil, “I think if I were to go away on a visit just now neither of them would miss me. It seems a little odd to see papa so attentive to a young lady visitor; he generally either forgets all about them or else treats them as if they were still in pinafores.”

Phil grew suddenly serious. To Edie’s fancy he always grew serious when he spoke of Ellinor.

“I don’t quite understand it,” he answered; “I hope she doesn’t mean mischief.”

And then the next moment he was sorry he had used such a word. Edie looked so startled and puzzled, he could have thrashed himself for frightening her and setting her mind on possibilities which, after all, might never come to pass.

These two young people were on an odd, and not altogether comfortable, footing just then. Alone with each other, they unconsciously relapsed into their usual familiar, easy style of talk and manner, but before strangers, or even friends, their way of speaking, looking, moving, seemed restrained, sudden, abrupt.

People at Stanham were beginning to talk and wonder whether things were going quite smoothly between the squire’s daughter and the Colonel’s nephew.

Ellinor’s dark eyes, in appearance so languid, downcast, restful, in reality so keen, observant, scrutinising, noted how, as the days went by, the two seemed to grow more and more ill-at-ease in each other’s society, set her brains to work on the matter, and finally hazarded a question or two.

“Mr. Fairfax said you and Mr. Wickham were engaged to be married,” she began

one day, when, by an unusual chance, she found herself alone with Edie.

"Did he?" was Edie's laconic reply. But her hands began to tremble over the flower-vase she was filling, and she carefully turned her face away from the light.

"I shouldn't be ashamed to own to such a thing if I were you, little Edie," continued Ellinor who was a ruthless, unblushing questioner, and would have interrogated Royalty itself as to private family arrangements had the opportunity been given her.

"And I would not be ashamed to own to such a thing if it were true; but it is not," answered Edie, with a face grown crimson. Then she huddled her flowers together into the jar, and left the room in hot haste.

"I am very sorry it is not true," said Ellinor just before Edie had time to shut the door. If she had spoken out all her thoughts, she would have added: "By-and-by, Miss Edie, it is my intention that this young man's homage shall be transferred to me. It would add special zest to the whole thing if I thought it of right belonged to you."

Ellinor did not pause to ask herself why the fact of Phil Wickham being no longer Edie's lover should take a shred or two of interest from the game for which at that moment she was sorting her cards and focussing her faculties. The "why" of a thing mattered to her far less than its "how," "where," or "when." An all-sufficient reason she saw for the subjugation of Phil Wickham, for the winning of his heart (and perchance the breaking of it afterwards), in the fact that the young man was distinguished from his fellows by better looks and bearing, a suave manner, a tolerable fortune. Had he been poor, undersized, insignificant in figure and feature, she would undoubtedly have let him alone. Also had he fallen at once a worshipper at her shrine, the chances are she would have laughed in his face, told him not to make himself ridiculous, but to go back and make love to his little Edie.

As it was, however, the man's personality in the first instance attracted her; then his indifference piqued her.

"He despises me," she said, drawing herself to her full height in front of a mirror, and surveying a face that an Emperor might have been proud of in his bride. "I saw it in his eyes last night while I played *écarté* with the old squire; I felt it in the touch of his hand when I first met him in company with Rodney

Thorne in London. Yet he is fascinated while he shrinks from me. I could see that in his face the other night when I sang. Very good, Mr. Wickham. By-and-by you will be more than fascinated—that is all. To think of little Edie keeping such a man as that at her side when I beckon him away!"

These were Phil Wickham's best days as regarded health, strength, good looks, happiness. Up to now he had enjoyed an unbroken run of good fortune and good temper. Those who knew Phil intimately were apt to say he had never been known to lose his temper, save on one memorable occasion, when he had, as a boy of fifteen, half-strangled Lord Winterdowne's game-keeper for shooting a favourite lurcher of his. It showed how few crimes of graver kind could be laid at Phil's door, that this one youthful escapade should be remembered and recounted for some ten or twelve years afterwards. It is true there were one or two fault-finders a little fond of saying that Phil's serenity of temper was not to be wondered at, seeing that things had always been made smooth and pleasant for him from boyhood upwards; that Harrow and Oxford had been made as delightful places of abode to him as wealthy friends and plenty of pocket-money could make them; that an easy, happy temper surely might be the one thing expected to be found in company with a man who possessed a good stud of horses, who enjoyed a yearly three months of fishing, yachting, canoeing, or mountaineering in any quarter of the globe he pleased; who owned a nice little independent income derived from his mother's property; and who looked forward to the possession of Wickham Place, with its park, woods, and pasture-land, at a not very distant period; and then they would wind up with hinting their fears that Phil's temper might be qualified by an additional adjective appended to the "good"—viz., indolent.

Now, this was altogether a mistake. Phil had too much muscle in him—mental and physical—to be downright hopelessly indolent. He was a little disposed to take life easily—that was all. He did not go out of his way to hunt up troubles; he did not beat the bushes in search of annoyances. The wind was blowing, and filled out his sail; what wonder if he laid aside his oars, and went with the current, more especially when that current was setting in exactly in the direction of the haven "whither his soul would be?"

THE UNSEEN POOR.

FOR some time past public attention has been much directed towards the condition of the abject poor. It is certainly well that the richer half of the world should learn something of the way in which the poorer half live; but worked-up agitations and popular philanthropic movements frequently involve a good deal of wasted and certainly misdirected energy. It were well if the charitably disposed paused for a while, and reflected whether those whose poverty is so patent to the eye really suffer the most deeply from the stings of pauperism.

It is forgotten that while to the lowest scale of human life poverty is a hard lot somewhat tempered by habit, to higher grades of society poverty is really a crime. They dare not show to their neighbours and acquaintances any outward evidences of their poverty—they dare not reveal the terrible pinchings and struggles they go through to keep their little home together, or the anxiety they suffer in raising the little rent they have to pay weekly for a humble lodging in a respectable house and neighbourhood. The poor gentleman, the poor lady, the poor clerk out of employment, must maintain their respectability, for their pecuniary ruin means also social ruin. There is a point in certain grades of human existence where respectability becomes a burden and a tax. It is all very well to say, "there is menial labour open to them." There is no greater cant abroad than the affectation that menial labour is a disgrace; but menial labour requires skill, and unless a man or woman be reared to it, he or she is valueless in that capacity. To be a competent navy or labourer requires a certain muscular development and training. To be a skilled carpenter or bricklayer requires as much knowledge, skill, and nicety of touch as many callings of higher repute. I am purposely putting aside all considerations of the natural and actual horror and pain felt by all refined natures at contact with sordid surroundings and coarsely vulgar associates. But to the well bred and educated man or woman all this means trial and suffering, and it is a species of trial and suffering quite unknown to the inhabitants of a slum. The deserving poor, the poor who get no sympathy, do not all live in slums. The popular journalist can make no sensation articles on the lives of men who conceal their sufferings under decent black coats and nearly starve in

dingy two-pair backs. The suffering is silent, it is not advertised. In the privacy of their poorly-furnished rooms, the tears may be bitter, the sighs heavy, but the world knows nothing of all that. The poor tradesman, ruined, perhaps, by no fault of his own—crushed by competing with huge capitalists—who will set him on his legs again? A careful study of the annual statistics of suicides will show that nearly all the "cases" found are respectably dressed. The inhabitants of slums seldom commit suicide. The most powerful incentives to suicide are shame, anxiety, and mental suffering.

To suffer mentally one must have a mind; a large portion of the inhabitants of slums have no minds—they are animal, they grovel; they do not really wish to be clean, decent, or respectable. But the poor man, who has been decently reared, who has come to poverty through family misfortune, who is willing to work, but perhaps has no practical trade though he may possess fair average abilities—how is he to get a living? Who will help him? There are hundreds and hundreds of decently-clad men about who are on the verge of starvation. They are intelligent, respectable; but they cannot find channels of occupation. They would willingly take any labour they could do to get a pound a week, and they know not where to look for it. These are the deserving poor—none the less deserving that they are "unseen" by the public eye. The want of food and comfort is not the least of their pain—they suffer hourly agonies of shame and wearing anxiety.

Would not it be well if some of the energy which is now being directed towards petting the denizens of the slums were used in founding some responsible institution, conducted charitably but on strict business principles, which should undertake to find "openings" for respectable men and women in want of work, and to assist unfortunate tradespeople with loans on easy terms, but strictly business principles? The difficulty would be in getting the unseen poor to reveal themselves, they so shrink from parading their sufferings. But if they could feel assured that they would be treated kindly, and their affairs investigated without patronage or unfeeling arrogance, they would apply, and such an institution would be the means of saving many a valuable member of society from despair. For, be it remembered, it is the respectable

and educated men and women who are valuable to society. A man who is manly and a woman who is womanly should not be allowed to perish. It is no more than the truth to say that many of the people who infest the slums, are not only useless but dangerous to society. Cleaning their homes and relieving their necessities will not eradicate their vicious propensities and their low tastes. But it is a crying shame to the country that many hundreds of individuals, who are refined by nature and have no vices, are cut away, not only from human assistance, but even from human sympathy.

Take the case of a widow who has been left in poor circumstances by the death of her husband. She has been reared respectably; she is not capable of hard work. She is just able to take a small house and to let lodgings. She is burdened with rates and taxes; she, perhaps, has difficulties with her lodgers, who take advantage of her if she have not that shrewdness and certain hardness which belong to the professional landlady. She has hard work to make both ends meet and to keep herself from the parish. If she gets into difficulties, who is there to help her, to save her at the critical moment when circumstances become too hard for her?

Take again the common instance of a lady by birth and education, who is left nearly destitute with an only child to rear, who is her pride. She cannot let this child be dragged up. People in the slums are often reckless in the matter of children, because they care not if they disport themselves in the filth of the gutter. It is no shame to them that their young children learn to swear as soon as they can talk. The lady strives to educate her child out of her small income. She is friendless; she has no knowledge of the world; she is victimised by all sorts of people—servants, tradespeople, agents, and even lawyers. She cannot beg; she cannot work at anything practical. If inadvertently she gets into debt, she is "sold up"; she must bear all in silence. Average humanity does not realise her position, because average humanity does not see her in rags. No journalist proclaims her case. No subscription is raised for her. She deserves help, but she does not get it. She must die of shame or starve.

Those among the unseen poor, who occupy the saddest positions of difficulty, are the poor gentleman or the poor lady thrown upon their own resources for a living, the struggling author, and the poor

artist or musician. The prospects of these in life are more hopeless than those of the clerk out of work, because the latter, if he have already occupied a post of trust, may get another if he try hard enough, and he probably belongs to some club or benefit society, and if he have been wise enough to remain single, he may tide over a bad time.

But the gentleman of birth and breeding who has been left without means is in a terrible position. His training renders him inadequate for practical business purposes—his lack of experience closes every avenue to him, and he is lucky if he find a chance to earn eighteen shillings a week. Thus we know of two young men, sons of a Colonel in the army, who are earning a pound a week apiece as salesmen in a co-operative store, and think themselves fortunate to have the chance of doing so. Some time since a certain hospital advertised for a secretary. The result was two hundred applications from gentlemen unable to find employment. But putting aside the difficulty of practical inaptitude, the legitimate labour-market is so overstocked, that a chemist in Oxford Street, who recently advertised for a light porter, received by one post upwards of forty letters all from men over thirty years of age—the remuneration offered being fourteen shillings a week.

If practical people cannot get work, what chance is there for a man who is accomplished, but has no practical knowledge of any one trade or calling. In nearly all departments of trade or mechanics the skilled labourer can find work—it is the mediocrity which fails; but if mediocrity fails, what is to become of utter incompetency? And it can hardly be said to be a man's fault if he have no special calling. The case of the poor gentleman is far more pitiable and hopeless, if less sensational, than the squalid misery of the slum-pauper. He dare not write a letter for relief to anyone of wealth and importance, because he will be confounded with the abominable begging-letter swindlers, all of whom ought, when discovered, to be very heavily punished, as they not only defraud the benevolent, but turn charity away from the doors of the deserving. If he have acquaintances they are sure to cool towards him when his poverty becomes self-evident. His friends, if he have any, are sure to be as poor as himself, and are, therefore, unable to help him.

The case of the poor lady, who is refined and sensitive, is equally painful. There

are more fields open to women now than of yore; but then women cannot go about and "hunt up" work as men can. We know of one poor lady now, intelligent and accomplished, who is working at drudgery in seclusion, for a wage that a parlour-maid would sneer at. The monotony of her life is terrible. Two more well-educated women we know also, who, being clever with their needles, took to dressmaking, and were "cut" by all their relations in consequence. They do only fairly well, though skilled in the business, because they lose by bad debts, and must make a certain outlay during the year to keep up their connection. Another most patient and respectable young woman supports herself solely by her needle; she is too weak for menial labour; she has one sister who earns a living as a servant, but who never visits her. She has two other sisters gone quite to the bad, as so many orphan-girls do go in cities. She lives quite alone, and dare not go about much, for fear of losing her character. Her life is terribly monotonous. Her health is feeble, and she is threatened with loss of sight. She rarely earns more than fifteen shillings a week. Yet she always dresses nicely, and keeps her small room clean and tidy. Indeed, the most striking thing about the lives of these deserving poor is the patience and resignation they exhibit under their hard lot, and their resolution in maintaining to the last their respectability of appearance and behaviour.

We know of a mother and two daughters, all accomplished and highly educated; the two girls are clever actresses, and have had professional engagements, yet they cannot earn a living, try how they will. Once, when the elder girl gave a dramatic recital, she had to go round and deliver her own hand-bills and window-bills. Often they have hardly enough to eat, and yet must dress with care and taste. This is partly owing to the rush of educated people on to the stage. But the stage is a hard career to a sensitive woman, unless she have sufficient talent and enthusiasm to set against the weariness of rehearsals, the worry of travelling, and the vulgarity of too many theatrical associations. Natural aptitude is more important than high education for the stage. No amount of technical education will make an actor of a man, or an actress of a woman, if he or she be not naturally a powerful mimic. But who will save inadequate talent from starvation?

It is said to be a law of nature that the

"weakest goes to the wall," and the beneficial result of this arrangement lies in the "survival of the fittest." It is doubtful, however, if this law can be said to work fairly under the artificial conditions of modern life. Nowadays, it is not always the morally or physically weak and degraded beings who succumb. The modern standard of strength is the possession of money. Intellectual or physical power will avail little without some money, or unless they can be readily turned into money. But nothing makes money so readily as money. "Nothing succeeds like success." In the fate of too many of the unseen poor is seen the fact that the fittest do not always survive. The terribly overcrowded state of the labour-market shows that in one direction the balance of nature has been upset. Somewhere about half a century ago, the warning note in this matter was struck by the Rev. Mr. Malthus. Like all true prophets and thinkers, he was cried down, and abused by the false sentimentalists. But the truth is revealed, when we find willing labour useless because in excess, and the most able and the most willing workers not always those who get work to do. We may well be alarmed at statistics, which show that in New York alone, eighty thousand workers are out of employment, and twenty thousand of these destitute. If your field of labour will only employ eighty thousand labourers, and you have one hundred thousand, then twenty thousand must starve. This is incontrovertible. Supposing you can transfer these twenty thousand to other fields, you are only postponing the ultimate famine a generation or two.

Take the case of a young author, or journalist of talent and energy, if he be entirely without means and dependent upon his pen for his living. What is his position? Mr. Gladstone, we believe, once stated that the value of mental labour was decreasing. This is a certainty, which the establishment of the School Board has not tended to lessen. It may do no great harm in the long run if it tend to prove to people there is no disgrace in manual labour. As Mr. Ruskin says: "There is no reason why a ploughman should not know Greek." But a man who has been trained to work with his head, cannot readily or successfully take to physical labour.

Notwithstanding the great literary activity of modern days, it is not possible for a writer of ability to make a living unless he obtain regular work

upon an established journal, or unless by some striking effort he, as it were, "knocks the public between the eyes," and so brings himself into notice—even by this means he is likely to obtain more fame than fortune. The golden age of periodical literature was five-and-twenty years ago, or thereabouts. Then editors were keenly on the look-out for new talent. Now the supply is greater than the demand; the crowd of writers is largely augmented by many who do not depend on their pens for their living. These can work with more ease, and have more leisure for study. Editors are so worried by a mass of correspondence, that few of them care to sift the matter offered to them, mostly preferring to lean on known names. Then the competition in periodicals is so great that one only gets half-a-guinea for matter which, twelve years since, was worth a guinea. The struggling author now may send out twenty manuscripts, and fifteen will miss fire altogether, and of the five accepted perhaps three will not be paid for. Half of the rest will not be returned to him, but go into the waste-paper basket. The struggling author works hard, and most of his work goes for nothing. He lives on hope, and the postman's knock at his door more often brings a pang than a joy to his heart. Let him be ever so clever, if he have no name, or no regular engagement on a journal, he cannot make a living by mere fugitive writing. If he is at all a good writer, he is unfit for any other work; from the years of study he has had to perfect himself in an art that brings him no return, he has been unable to gain knowledge of any other trade or profession. Even if capable of quickly mastering details of business, no one will engage him, because he has no experience. If his pen fail him, what can he do? Only some luminous idea, or lucky chance, can save him from starvation. If he can write stories badly enough for some of the penny journals, he will get, perhaps, eight pounds for one which takes him a month to write. For a three-volume novel, which no man can invent and write in less than six months, he will get thirty pounds, perhaps. And as for dramatic authorship—no one will read the play when it is written, much less produce it. If he writes a five-act melodrama, and likes to hang about after the managers of outlying theatres, he may get an offer of five pounds for the entire right of the work, and then be asked to pay for the cost of the all-important "posters." These are

facts. There is no harder career than letters. Even men who have had money have taken years to establish their reputation. Disappointment, despair, and starvation are all that await the poor author. He is one of the most pitiable figures in the pathetic group of the unseen poor. His higher talent and greater sensitiveness make him suffer the more keenly. Let no man, however talented, think to earn a living by writing alone. If he must earn a living by letters, let him rather be a postman.

It is an unfortunate fact that many of those occupations in life which require the most education and the longest period of what, for want of a better term, we must call apprenticeship, yield the slowest and most doubtful monetary return.

The inadequate remuneration of curates in the Church has long been proverbial. But they hold a better social position than either artists or musicians who are poor.

It is well-nigh impossible for the unknown artist to earn bread in these days unless he can use graving-tools, or possess a skilful facility in designing in black and white. By this means he may become attached to the staff of one of the numerous comic journals or illustrated newspapers. Some artists imagine they can eke out an existence by scene-painting; but this is a huge error, for scene-painting is an art by itself, extremely difficult and very laborious. "Pot-boiling" art, as it is called, is rapidly becoming extinct as the spread of art education increases. Most of these "slap-dash" productions are shipped to the colonies, and the price paid for them by the dealers is simply one remove from starvation price. To be a successful painter of "pot-boilers," it is essential that one be a very bad artist. It is quantity, not quality, that is wanted, and to make a decent living, the painter must become as much chained to his easel as the average clerk is chained to his desk.

The poor musician is in an equally bad plight, and the only chance he has is by obtaining a teaching connection. While a curate will get, perhaps, forty pounds a year, an organist will probably only get twenty pounds. To be an efficient organist and choir-master, a man must know music thoroughly, and be a man of taste and feeling. The organist is supposed to eke out his living by teaching; but he cannot always obtain enough of such work.

Now with all these artists, who must be men of education and gentlemen, who must

maintain a certain appearance in accordance with the social position they hold, what is to become of them when competition drives them out of the field of labour, as it does in these days? What charity is there to relieve their absolute necessities? What means can they appeal to to find a field for their labours?

A poor man looks around him, and sees huge advertisements of quack medicines, exquisite soaps, new plays, and new periodicals; but nowhere can he find a guide to indicate to him a possible field of employment. Advertisements he will find offering him inducements to part with money if he has any; but nowhere can he find a direct offer of that needful commodity in return for his labour, without previous disbursement on his part in the shape of fees, or securities, or guarantee funds, and such like. Indeed, often when he is in most need of funds himself, because his address is in the Court Directory he will probably receive an appeal for money. We know a starving author who, on one of his birthdays, found himself with no money and no means of getting a dinner on credit. The morning post brought him an elaborate appeal to subscribe to the funds of the Ragged School Union. If one be in rags, one may obtain parish relief; but if one have a good coat, one dare not apply for it, and, worse than all, one dare not pawn the coat.

Surely some scheme of an institution might be practically devised, which would undertake to aid the pauper in broadcloth to find work, or small capital. A man in a strait would not object to pay a fee of five shillings if he knew that some real aid would be given him, some practical advice and kindly sympathy by some benevolent yet practical men, who would make it their business to try and remedy a social grievance, which is so pitiable as almost to become a social evil. Thus the working expenses of the institution would be paid. Real good would be done to society, because men and women calculated to be ornaments to it would be saved from despair, employers might obtain workers at once honest and intelligent, and the deserving poor would be no longer hidden, but gradually become "unseen," because non-existent.*

* The Editor of ALL THE YEAR ROUND does not adopt the responsibility of all the statements and opinions set forth in this article, which must be taken as expressing the views of its author, and not necessarily those of the Editor.

AN INLAND SEA FOR AFRICA.

LAND and water, astronomers say, are much better distributed in our outside neighbouring planet, Mars, than on our own native sphere, Terra. Although their land-surface is a trifle in excess of their seas, the Martians have the wet and the dry, the fat and lean of their globe, like first-rate bacon, so pleasantly and fairly interlarded, that they would not believe either in our oceans or in Asiatic and African deserts, unless they saw them with their own eyes, of course through extra-powerful telescopes.

Instead of islands here and there, emerging with a struggle above the waters, their continents seem rather to reduce their oceans to the condition of inland seas—veritable Mediterraneans. They need no Columbus to discover their America, for, having neither an Atlantic nor a Pacific, they might almost walk dryshod round their little world, whose seas are cut up into long-drawn gulfs, like our own Red Sea or Adriatic. Of their supposed canals, not less than one hundred miles broad, all we can say at present is, that if they really are the results of manual labour, they beat Ferdinand de Lesseps and all his works—and all his projects too—hollow.

We Terrestrials, on the contrary, with three times as much water as land, have not always the water where we want it. True, Europe itself is so environed by seas that it may almost be considered as an overgrown peninsula, while its numerous inland lakes, small and great, must have a beneficial effect on its climate. The same may be said, to a certain extent, of the much vaster area of North America. But take the great Asiatic continent. Would it not be an excellent thing if we could cut out a good piece of its sterile centre—which might be utilised as an island somewhere off its south coast—and fill up the hole with water, salt or fresh? This is what it is proposed to do for North Africa—except that the hole is ready made, and only requires filling.

The matter would be made clearer if the reader had before him a good map of Algeria and Tunis, on the east coast of which latter province he will note a large bay called the Gulf of Kabes, or Gabes, and westwards, in Algeria, the province of Constantine.

Now, south of the provinces of Constantine and Tunis, there exist vast depressions

in the soil which extend from the meridian of Biskra to the Gulf of Gabes—namely, about two hundred and fifty English miles. The bottom of these depressions—called by the natives “chotts”—is occupied by surfaces which have been levelled by the action of water, and are now covered with a crust of crystallised salt of various thickness.

There are three principal chotts; the chott Melrir, the chott Rharsa, and the chott Djerid, which last is the nearest to the Gulf of Gabes. A most important fact is that the altitude of these is at present known with great precision. From 1873 to 1883, one thousand seven hundred and twenty kilometres (one thousand and seventy-five miles) of geometrical levellings have been executed, in sections of from something more than one hundred to one hundred and fifty yards each.

The level of the sea at low water in the Gulf of Gabes was taken as the point of departure for these surveys, whose absolute exactitude has been admitted by the Académie des Sciences. If any doubts about the question were still entertained, they would be dispelled by the survey recently made for a line of railway from Biskra to Touggourt. The level of the Mediterranean at Philippeville was taken as the starting-point for the levels obtained on that occasion. On reaching Mraier, on the western end of the chott Melrir, the level was found to coincide, within a very few inches, with that resulting from taking the Gulf of Gabes as the starting-point.

Two out of the three above-mentioned chotts, namely, Melrir and Rharsa, are below the level of the sea. If therefore they were put in communication with the Gulf of Gabes by means of a sufficiently broad canal, its waters would rush in and form an inland sea whose level would be practically the same as that of the Mediterranean. The new sea resulting from inundating these two chotts would have a total surface of eight thousand two hundred square kilometres, or from fourteen to fifteen times the size of the Lake of Geneva, which covers only five hundred and seventy-seven square kilometres. And as the bottom of the chotts is flat and horizontal, the inland sea would have nearly the same depth throughout its extent, namely, an average depth of water of twenty-four metres, or seventy-eight English feet and a fraction.

Were this herculean project once

executed, there is little doubt that not a few consequences would ensue from it which at present are unexpected and unforeseen. But there are also not a few desirable results which may very fairly be reckoned upon. For instance, the chotts, in their actual condition, are no better than muddy, saline, swampy hollows, which, at certain times of the year, under an African sun, become centres of every form of marsh disease. Thus, in the northern part of the chott Melrir, the streams known as the Oued Djeddi and the Oued el Arab widen into broad deltas and spread their waters over the swamps called Farfaria, covering a surface of about one thousand square kilometres. This vast region, inaccessible in winter, overgrown with reeds and rushes, becomes partially dried in summer, and is thereby converted into a source of pestilence. As soon as the month of March arrives, the natives avoid its neighbourhood.

The chotts Melrir and Rharsa are the receptacles of the waters of an immense basin which, by the valley of the Igharghar, reaches as far as the Djebel Hogghar, situated nearly one thousand kilometres to the south, and, by the valley of the Oued Djeddi, to the Djebel Amour, four hundred kilometres to the west. What possibility is there of draining these fenny depressions? How can the waters that run into them be got rid of, either superficially or underground? If they were above the level of the sea, the problem would be capable of solution; but in consequence of their inferior altitude, they must remain for ever in the state of pestiferous bogs, unless they can be again covered with a deep stratum of water; that is, unless they can be restored to the previous condition which has been changed by some natural accident; in fact, unless they can become once more an inland arm or gulf of the Mediterranean.

The chott Djerid, like the chotts Melrir and Rharsa, is a depression enclosed by higher ground in all directions, and continually kept in a muddy state by a considerable mass of stagnant water. But this chott, being above the level of the sea, can easily be drained and made wholesome to dwell in. All that is needed, is to put it in communication either with the Mediterranean or with the chott Rharsa, by opening one or two efficient cuttings or trenches. The stagnant water will thus be carried away; the soil will rapidly be drained and dried; the salt which saturates

it will be gradually washed out; and the grounds of the chott Djerid, which consist of exceedingly fertile mud, will not only cease to be dangerously unhealthy, but, after thorough drainage, will be all that the cultivator can desire. Visions of cotton, sugar-canes, and other valuable tropical crops, will at once present themselves as future probabilities. And historical facts confirm those expectations. In the time of the Romans, when the chotts were full of water, Tunis and the south of Algeria were incomparably more fertile than at present. The sterility of the adjoining regions has been the consequence of the drying-up of the chotts.

If, therefore, contrary to first expectations, the chott Djerid cannot be inundated—if the surface of the inland sea will be less extensive than had been hoped—still, the completion of the project will result in restoring to cultivation one million two hundred and thirty-five thousand acres of excellent earth, which at present is in such a permanently swampy condition that it is impossible to venture upon it without danger. An additional important circumstance is that the sea-water, once introduced into the basin of the chotts, will exert so considerable a pressure on the bottom of those immense cavities, that the fresh water, which now oozes into them, will be stemmed and driven back, and will consequently increase the yield, and even the number, of the wells and springs which give fertility to the neighbouring oases.

The engineering details of this gigantic project—how many years it will take to fill the inland sea by means of a canal of given breadth and depth, conducting to it the waters of the Mediterranean; the nature of the difficulties to be surmounted, and other practical speculations—may be learned from a pamphlet of great ability and completeness* by Le Commandant Roudaire, with illustrative maps, and a preface by M. Ferdinand de Lesseps. It gives the reader, who takes any interest in the scheme, a mass of information which evidently cannot be more than alluded to here.

The realisation of the new inland sea will cost, of course, a considerable sum, which is estimated at six millions sterling; but it will be infinitely better spent money than the thousands of pounds wasted on

Arctic expeditions, for instance, with scarcely any other end or object to boast of than the danger, almost the certainty, incurred of condemning successive crews of brave and able men to cruelly prolonged torture and miserable death.

It will be worth paying a trifle of cash (if an invitation is not to be had) for a ticket to the grand-stand, which ought to be erected at the point where the water from the Mediterranean first gushes and pours into the chott Rharsa, and gradually floods it, if only to witness the surprise and consternation caused amongst the unseen, and perhaps unsuspected, inhabitants of the swamp. The salt, to which they are acclimatised, will not kill many of the creatures belonging and peculiar to the fauna of the chotts, but a continuous deluge of water most certainly will, unless they speedily shift their quarters. It will be everyone for himself, and a ducking take the hindmost. What a capital opportunity it will offer to zoological collectors! Only those spectators who are afraid of creepy-crawlies, of snakes and lizards, frogs and toads—nay, of rats, mice, and unknown wee beasties—will be wise to secure a seat well raised above the path of the startled emigrants; for there will be such a scampering "*saue qui peut*" as is not often seen at a sitting. But the true zoologist is afraid of nothing. He will handle a porcupine as coolly as if it were an eider-down pillow, and face a laughing hyena with a defiant smile.

And when the sea is filled up to high-water mark, what a capital fishpond, winter sanitarium, and yachting station it will make! Too far distant from its parent, the greater sea, to be resorted to as a harbour of refuge, it is sure, nevertheless, to be frequented by trading vessels to carry off the produce of its banks, which will eventually be dotted with groves of date and cocoa-nut palms, clumps of olive-trees, patches of bananas, and other tropical fruits. Hotels, perhaps towns, will spring up on picturesque and eligible sites; luxurious house-boats will float in its most sheltered and shady creeks. The inflowing stream will rapidly stock it with shoals of fish, marine crustaceans, molluscs, seaweeds, and their germs, on which a host of creatures feed. Turbot, tunny, soles, mullet, gurnards, fishing-frogs or anglers, and such like piscine dainties, will increase and multiply. With saffron and onions from the garden-plot at hand, oil from the

* *La Mer Interieure Africaine*, Paris, Imprimerie de la Société Anonyme des Publications Périodique. 13—15, Quai Voltaire.

tree, and a haul or two in the live fish-box, the Marseillais epicure, out for a holiday, will come and eat as good a bouillabaisse as he could get at home.

Prophets of evil predict that by the continual inflow of Mediterranean water (already saltier than the ocean) to supply the continual loss by evaporation, the inland sea, gradually growing saltier and saltier, will eventually become one solid mass of crystallised salt—the biggest block of rock-salt in the world. To this, we can only say that it will take a very, very long time to do it, and that we cannot tell what may happen between this and then. That a change of climate will occur is inevitable. The loss by evaporation may be, partially at least, replaced by rains. Salt also evaporates, when in company with vapour, as well as water; which any one may test and ascertain by licking his lips after passing through a sea-fog. In any case, barrenness for barrenness, things will be no worse than they were before—better even, by the complete suppression of marsh miasma and the cultivation of the Djerid chott.

But M. Ferdinand de Lesseps assures us that the inland sea will be perfectly safe from silting or salting up for the next thousand or fifteen hundred years—which guarantee is a sufficiently lengthened term for any human enterprise. Of course he does not reckon upon earthquakes or other abnormal geological phenomena. A more serious matter is to consider what profits and advantages may be reasonably expected from the completion of the work.

The first will arise from a zone of land surrounding the inland sea, and conceded by the State to the company which undertakes to execute the project. This land, formed by the drying up of very fertile mud, but completely unproductive in consequence of drought, would soon acquire considerable value from the modified climate due to the presence of the new-made sea. It is well known that, in the region of the oases, when water is abundant enough for cultivation of the soil to be possible, every cultivated acre gives a net revenue of twenty pounds a year. An idea may thence be formed of the profits realisable by the company from the lands conceded.

Next comes the felling of timber in the forests on the south slope of the Aures, the privilege of cutting which is demanded for ninety-nine years. The forests of Amar Khaddon and Chechar, for instance, cover-

ing an area of more than two hundred thousand acres, are filled with trees of great age and handsome dimensions. But nothing can be done with them at present, through the absolute want of means of communication. And yet, if only for the sake of maintaining those forests in a healthily productive state, periodical thinnings would be beneficial. The inland sea would make that possible, since they are distant from it only eighteen miles. Moreover, it is certain that the forests themselves will benefit largely by the modified climate. There can be no doubt that the aqueous emanations floating in the air will counteract the drought with which the sirocco periodically inflicts them.

Then come the fisheries of the inland sea, whose rich yield may be absolutely counted on, from the example of the Bitter Lakes along the course of the Suez Canal. Those lakes, completely dry before the opening of the canal, have become exceedingly full of fish, in spite of their extra briny water, consequent on the dissolution of the crystallised salt which lay at the bottom of their bed. It would seem that this excess of salt has even an attraction for many fish, for they abandon Lake Timsah, which receives the overflow of the fresh-water canal, and is consequently less salt, and migrate in mass to the Bitter Lakes, which are distant sixty miles from the Mediterranean, and only eighteen from the Red Sea. But it is remarkable that nearly all those fish are Mediterranean species. The length, therefore, of the canal from the Gulf of Gabes will prove no hindrance to the stocking of the inland sea with fish.

As an estimate of the probable profits of the fisheries, it may be stated that the fishing of Lake Mensaleh, whose surface is relatively small, is let for eighty thousand pounds a year. The tenant, a native Egyptian, gets a good deal of money out of it, although the work is very badly done. Certain species of fish, after their roe has been extracted to make a sort of caviare called "boutargue," are thrown away, and so yield absolutely nothing, whereas oil at least might be obtained from them, and afterwards manure possessing the qualities of guano.

Besides which, the chott Djerid is covered at certain points with layers of crystallised salt, which render it a vast natural salt mine. The railway which the company will lay down alongside the canal of supply, as soon as the works are fairly

commenced, will permit the immediate working, almost without expense, of these immense quantities of salt, whose whiteness and purity are quite exceptional.

The new inland African Sea would also give to Algeria, and thereby to France, a secure frontier of the greatest political and military importance. One thing, however, is clear—namely, that this sea, if realised, will benefit very many persons besides its projectors and its executors.

DO YOU REMEMBER?

DEAR, do you remember lingering side by side,
Where in the midnight heavens the daylight never died;

Where the waves' recurrent music kept cadence to
our thought,
And the hour and the silence our love to rapture
wrought?

Dear, do you remember the fair and foolish
dream?
How life grew to enchantment beneath its golden
gleam?

While the pulses thrilled together to the clasping
of the hand,
And the moon's path lay in silver on the sea and
on the sand;

And, like phantoms o'er its radiance, flitted the
shadowy ships,
And love and life were meeting at the touching of
the lips.

Ah me! how fast it faded, that glittering heaving
path,
The glory of the skies above, as of the earth
beneath!

The dream was false and fickle, the hope an idle
thing,
The music died upon the notes, and snapped the
golden string.

Perhaps it had been wiser if nor heart nor lip had
met,
Dear, do you remember?—it were better to forget.

SHILLINGBURY SKETCHES.

OUR YEOMEN. THE FATHER.

ON the authority of a renowned poet—now, indeed, we may say, on the authority of a "person of quality" likewise—we are assured that "the thoughts of men are widened with the process of the suns;" and, if I remember aright, the general teaching of the poem from which the sentence above is quoted, sets out the belief that the human race has entered the path of progress, and is pressing onward with a will. This question of progress, however, is one out of which, on slight provocation, may arise a battle as keen as that of the Books or of the Frogs and Mice, so I will merely glance at it, inferring I may assume that the present era is one of change, and saying nothing as to whether the change is for the better or for the worse. I have

been led thus to moralise on the mutability of things in consequence of my experiences during a visit I lately paid to Hedgelands Manor, the residence of Mr. Arthur Suttaby, a house in which many of the happiest of my youthful days were spent. The reader will probably decide at once that I found the Hedgelands of to-day changed from the Hedgelands of my youth, and in doing so he will not be far wide of the mark.

Though it lies within the parochial limits of Shillingbury the manor-house stands a good two miles from the market-place, and its owner gets very little in return for the rates for paving and gas-lighting, which he has to pay, in order that the denizens of Shillingbury proper may walk with unsullied boots, and not knock their heads against the town pump on such nights as may not be illuminated by the light of the moon. The country round Shillingbury is rather tame in its natural features, but the hill down which one has to go in order to reach the happy valley of Hedgelands is a very respectable hill, when judged by an English standard. This valley is narrow and winding. Along it there runs as charming a little trout-stream as the heart of an angler could desire. It is thickly wooded with fine-grown elms and chestnuts, and it is bounded on the far side by another boldly-rising breast of down-like country. The house is a long, low-walled, steep-roofed building, without anything to mark it in the way of architectural pretensions save the flint facings of the walls and the mouldered brick mullions of the windows. It is an old house, and so, in a manner, interesting, but its chief title to renown lay in the fact that, amidst the decay and absorption of the small estates which had been going on at such an untoward rate of speed since the beginning of the century, it still sheltered a man who still owned as well as tilled the surrounding acres.

In my youth, the owner of the place was a Mr. Nathaniel Suttaby. He and my father were close friends, and Arthur Suttaby, his son, though some years my junior, was my own chief playmate. To a Londoner, life in Shillingbury itself would have seemed real country; but I, as a boy born and bred in the town, was never looked upon as a *bonâ fide* country lad by my friends at Hedgelands, and often, during the Sunday morning's walk which my father and Mr. Suttaby invariably took together after service, the latter would

remark that I was looking pale and pinched like, and that a breath of country air would do me all the good in the world. Then, as a rule, the next morning, a strange composite vehicle, called a sociable, would drive up to our front door to carry me off, nothing loth, for a week's run in the farmyards, and barns, and granaries of Hedge-lands Manor.

Mr. Nathaniel Suttaby was a yeoman of the old-fashioned type, and his establishment was certainly conducted on old-fashioned lines. In the days of his early training, master and servant, farmer and merchant, carried on their dealings largely by the transfer of kind. Money as the medium of exchange did not play the part it does now in our more complicated social state. In Hedgelands, at that time, there would be always as many female servants again as one would now find in a house of like pretension; but very few of them got any wages in hard money. The village-girl had the run of the table, a new dress or two, and training of a rough sort, which generally enabled her to secure a place in a real gentleman's house, provided that Hymen did not interfere and join her fate with that of one or other of the carter-lads who abounded in the stables just as the maids did in the kitchen. There was rough plenty, both for master and servants. The stray caller, let him be neighbour, cattle-dealer, or messenger, would never be allowed to go away without first taking the good cheer of either cellar or larder. Mr. Suttaby would stand at the front door, with his hands in his pockets, on the look-out for such like droppers-in, and would ever be ready with some rough bit of pleasantry concerning the sharpness of his visitors' noses as to where a good dinner was to be found; but, in spite of his gibes, he was always in his heart glad to see them, to hear what news was stirring in the next hundred, and how lambs were selling at Martlebury. The old gentleman had a hearty laugh and rather a bitter tongue, and a selection of ancient jokes, each flavoured with some special spice of personality, and these would be duly let off whenever the appropriate subject might approach the doorstep. The point of most of these, I remember, lay in the overweening arrogance and extravagance of the world in general, in these latter days, and in the frightful falling off that had come to pass universally since the days when he was a boy.

Mr. Suttaby was a tall old man, lank

and wiry. His face was clean-shaven, and his close white hair grew thick as a door-mat on his head, though—or, perhaps, because—he had never used a drop of any hair-preserving compound in his life. A blue coat with bright buttons, a buff waist-coat, drab breeches and gaiters, and a white spotted neckcloth, worn without any such superfluous refinement as a collar, made up his costume—a costume which knew no change during twenty-five years and more. Mr. Suttaby was a keen-witted, observant man, with a sound judgment, and gifted with that all-embracing, well-nigh infallible memory which is the compensation of those who read little. Memories like his run along in one narrow groove of personal observation, seizing upon every incident that meets them with octopus-like tenacity, in lieu of diffusing themselves in futile excursions over acres of printed broadsheet. Upon them, events such as a river flood, an unusually hot summer, or a bad lambing season, imprint themselves far more deeply than they would upon memories choked by the dust of the great grinding mill of modern intelligence. Mr. Suttaby could tell you, without a moment's hesitation, how many bushels per acre of wheat he threshed out of the home close the first year he farmed; what year it was when Harry Cole ran away to enlist; and how long old Sally Jarvis had been on the parish. He was shrewd and quick-sighted with regard to his business as far as his lights went, and probably his brain harboured no more cobwebs than might any day have been swept out of the craniums of enlightened persons by whom he would have been rated as an illiterate farmer, and nothing more.

I can recall some half-dozen individualities, familiar to me during youth, which, now that I look back at them over the best part of my life, seem to belong to a very remote antiquity. I doubt whether the young people of the present day, when they shall have spent enough time to enable them to indulge in the questionable luxury of retrospect, will note so great a gulf between themselves and the older stagers around them. The advent of the age of steam made society jump farther forward in ten years than in the whole preceding century. And of all the individualities just alluded to, Mr. Suttaby certainly dated back the farthest. His ideas, his speech, and his manners were archaic even for a man of his age, and there was a reason for this. Both his parents

died when he was very young, and he was brought up by his maternal grandmother, a lady who was born in the year A.D. 1698.

In her system of education, I think, Mrs. Endicott—for this was the old lady's name—must have followed a vigorous line, and one calculated to mould early into definite shape the young material she took in hand, for Mr. Suttaby, as a grown tree, certainly had a strong inclination towards the ways and habits of the last century, thus showing in what direction the twig had been bent. As I have said before, he held the belief—not uncommon amongst old gentlemen—that the world and all it contained were going to the mischief. With wider questions of the day—questions which are now fully, aye, and shrewdly discussed on the village-green and in the inn-kitchen—he troubled himself little. Now and then, when rumours of towns sacked and half destroyed by the mob of reform came to his ears, and stories of threshing-machines smashed by gangs of farm-labourers imperfectly instructed in the science of political economy, he would hazard the opinion that Government ought to do something; but politics at large he regarded as matters for the gentry and the people up in London to wrangle about at election-times. He always voted Whig, for the very good reason that his grandfather had done so all his life, and had taught him the following verse by way of helping him to form his political creed:

Last Christmas Day morning I thought it no sin
To drink a glass of Holland gin,
To clear my voice, and make me sing,
The Prince of Orange shall be king.

But to learn what Mr. Suttaby's real politics were would have been a difficult task, for I have over and over again heard him repeat with emphasis that Whigs and Tories were all rogues alike. I have known him, however, to speak in terms of high approval of Mr. Pitt, and of the high prices which blessed the land during that statesman's tenure of power, so I fancy, in spite of his blue and buff exterior, that he was a Tory at heart.

The internal economy of the house, as it used to be when I first knew it, certainly belonged to a bygone age. On entering one came into a huge square room with a brick floor and large, open chimney. On one side, and ranged in racks against the wall, hung a score or more of old brass-mounted muskets which had been sent down to Mr. Suttaby, as a man of weight, to distribute amongst the villagers in the

year when that futile camp was being formed on the heights behind Boulogne. Under the windows ran a long oaken table resting upon solid trestles let into the floor; and at this board in the hot summer weather the whole family would take their meals—master and mistress, son and daughters at one end, and the domestic servants, and now and then a farm-labourer, at the other. At one end of this apartment were two rooms panelled with fairly good work of the seventeenth century, and in the smaller of these, the keeping-room as it was called, the family usually lived. The larger, dignified with the style of the parlour, I never entered as a guest, but sometimes when I used to spend the day with Arthur, we boys would make furtive excursions thence. I cannot pretend to describe its equipment in detail, for I never saw it save in a dim, half light. I can only say that a good deal of care and brown-holland had been expended in covering everything upon which a cover could possibly be put. Its blinds were many times doubled; for Mrs. Suttaby, careful housewife as she was, held that light took the colour out of carpets and curtains as much as the full blaze of the sun; and people of her condition, when they fitted themselves out with household goods, did so for life, and she would have as soon thought of buying a second set of curtains or carpet for the parlour, as she would of going to London to be presented at Court. Upstairs there was a vast range of bedrooms, some of them almost as unapproachable as the above-described parlour, and above these the attics, a region of mystery and delight. The memory of the happy times I had spent in these elevated abodes was still so vivid during my late visit to Hedgelands, that I was strongly tempted to face dust and cobwebs, and crazy staircases, and revisit them; but my philosophy, warning me of the danger of attempting to repeat a success, came in just in time to hold me back.

Mrs. Suttaby, as long as I knew her, was an invalid; one of those who rather delight in parading their ailments. Her health was certainly indifferent, but she could not have been afflicted with half the diseases of which she was always discovering symptoms, or she must have gone to her grave years before she did. She was a tall, handsome woman, with dark, curling hair, and flashing black eyes. Her face was well-shaped, and her features

clearly-cut, and of a high-born type. Neither she nor her husband had anything like pride of birth, but now and then I have heard the old man declare that his wife, if she liked to do so, could show a descent which would put to shame the family claims of many of the county magnates round about. In most matters Mrs. Suttaby belonged to a past age almost as completely as her husband did; and for her the question of the subjection of women was scarcely a practical one. She was of a generation which took the rule of the strongest more as a matter of course than later ones have done, and in her relations with her husband there were traces of the age when the term of wife included many duties that we should now rate as menial. She may or may not have realised the fact that it was the destiny of women to weep, but it is certain that she accredited them with the liability of labour, and accordingly she ruled her maids with an iron hand, and kept them on the move from cockcrow to sunset.

The Suttaby family consisted of four daughters and one son. The girls were fine, tall, handsome women, strongly favouring their mother, and they were all married to neighbouring farmers, and the mothers of numerous children before they were any of them thirty years of age. With these we have little concern. Arthur, the only son, named after the Duke of Wellington, was born some six years after the youngest of the girls, and was in a way the child of his parents' old age. By some strange whim of destiny, the boy showed just as strong a tendency to reach forward to the future in his tastes and habits, as his father was disposed to hark back to his grandsire's time, and there was thus a far wider interval between the two than there commonly is between an elderly father and a young son. It was evident that considerable pressure would be needed to mould Arthur into conformity with the family traditions. When his son was born, Mr. Suttaby was well-to-do; for his position, indeed, he was a rich man; and, as the boy grew up, a legend gained currency in the household—a legend, it must be added, which had its source in a hidden and long suppressed ambition of Mrs. Suttaby's—that he was to be brought up like a gentleman. Where and from whom the good woman gleaned the notion of what a real gentleman ought to resemble, it will not profit us to consider; but I fear there is no doubt that she did not take her husband as a complete example, for Arthur was

taught early that it was vulgar to cool his tea in his saucer, or to use his knife to carry food from his plate to his mouth, or to employ in conversation the vigorous *Folkshire* provincialisms, all of which social offences, to my certain knowledge, Mr. Suttaby often committed.

It was soon evident that Arthur, as far as his outward seeming was concerned, would never even approach the paternal model; for his mother, with that silent, mild insistence by which weak people so often get their own way against people of stronger will, contrived that her boy, from the time he left the nurse's arms, should be attired exactly as the young Master Winsors were. Few of my readers will be able to realise, from actual experience, what was the youth's fashionable attire of 1840, or thereabouts, so I will refer them to contemporary illustrations, and leave them to judge whether Mrs. Suttaby would not have done better to have dressed her boy in the garb of any other known period of history. Arthur's schooling was, for a long time, a matter of some difficulty. Until he was nearly twelve, he went every day, for a couple of hours, to a Mr. Kench, a mild old gentleman, who had once kept a private school in a neighbouring town, and had now retired for a life of ease and the care of a garden to a pretty little cottage between *Hedglands* and *Shillingbury*; but when it was deemed that a course of study like the above was hardly enough for a boy of Arthur's age, he was sent to the grammar-school at *Martlebury*, where the boys learnt Latin and Greek, Euclid and Algebra, instead of the scarcely less ineffectual curriculum in vogue at the classical and commercial academies, which were then the sole fountains of learning in the smaller towns. Of course there was our own grammar-school, but that was just then falling into its lowest depths of decrepitude under Dr. *Addlestrop's* mismanagement, and, besides this, Mrs. Suttaby had an idea that something very superior, in the way of polish, would be imparted to the pupils of a grammar-school in a cathedral town. To his mother and sisters the day of Arthur's first departure to school was a very mournful one; and the old man, though he scoffed at the women for their display of soft-heartedness and affected the Roman father, looked rather wistfully at the boy's empty chair at meal-times, and set out with a heavy heart for his after-breakfast walk, in which he had for some time had his

boy as a companion. He went much more frequently, too, to Martlebury market, after Arthur was entered at the grammar-school, and it is needless to say that he never made the journey without taking with him some toothsome offering in the way of a hamper of cakes, and patties, and new-laid eggs, and divers others of those good things, which seemed to spring up naturally in the kitchen at Hedgelands. The boy came home for his Easter holidays, and was naturally made a hero of by the womankind. These, and probably Mr. Suttaby as well, enjoyed this first vacation quite as much as Arthur himself did. The boy was tractable and studious, and, thanks to the care of one of the sub-masters, who had taken a fancy to him, he learnt a good deal of useful knowledge in the way of chemistry and botany, branches which, it is hardly necessary to add, did not enter into the ordinary work of the school.

He grew up into a tall, handsome lad, a bit of a dandy as to his clothes, but manly withal. Everybody liked him, and it appeared as if Mrs. Suttaby's prescription for making a gentleman of her son was doing its work well, though, assuredly, it was making him into a man differing from his father as widely as winter from summer. It might have been on this account, or it might have been the result of reasons more complex, that Mr. Suttaby did not regard this gentleman-making process with the same approval as the rest of the world did.

The old man was, as I have said before, a sharp observer, and he had seen, with ever-growing regret and uneasiness, every time that Arthur came home from school, that the influences to which the boy was subjected, however desirable they might be in other respects, were not calculated to make him satisfied with a life such as he would have, farming the acres of Hedgelands, as so many generations of Suttabys had hitherto done. This life, the old man had decided, somewhat prematurely perhaps, must needs be good enough for anybody, seeing that it had been good enough for himself. Arthur would want reminding several times after breakfast that his father was ready for his morning walk round the farm, and would tear himself away from his book with a sigh and look of regret, and, for the first half-hour, would probably turn out a very uncongenial companion, for his thoughts would be with the essay or story he had

left, rather than with his father's remarks upon his own crops, or his criticisms of his neighbour's husbandry. Nothing that the boy did positively, no spoken word of his, tended to increase the father's uneasiness so much as the listlessness he showed where his interest should have been the keenest. There was a something in the air, an indefinable restraint, growing more and more marked every day, and threatening, ere long, to draw asunder completely the lives of father and son.

Mr. Suttaby was quite right in his apprehensions. The new surroundings of the boy were rapidly shaping him into a man utterly out of sympathy with the old home and its ways. There was soon no charm for him in its rude plenty and free simplicity, and after a little there grew up something like positive distaste, and, try as he might, he could not altogether hide this from his father's eye. He would constantly be letting fall remarks as to the careers which certain of his schoolfellows were going to follow: how one was going to be a clergyman, another a barrister, another was going to India, and another already talked of the red coat and sword he would wear when he had got his commission. He was conscious that he was just as clever as, and certainly better read than these, so there was a gnawing of bitter disappointment at his heart as he compared the prospects of his more fortunate schoolfellows with his own, which promised nothing better than a whole life spent in the midst of uncongenial surroundings. It was worse than ever when his father would make jokes, with something of mistrust in his voice and eye as to how his remarks would be received, as to what the young master would be up to when he should have done with books and school; how that three-year-old colt would be just fit for him to ride in a couple of years' time; and how they might perhaps manage to make a cricket-ground in the home pasture—not up to the mark of the grammar-school ground at Martlebury, perhaps, but one good enough for Arthur to play on with myself and some other boys out of the village. Arthur would say very little in reply to these suggestions. He would smile, a very wan and wintry smile for so young a lad; and the old man, knowing that all his solicitude and would-be kindness provoked no throb of pleasure in the boy's heart, would turn away with a muttered rebuke on his lips and bitterness in his soul.

When Arthur had been about two years at the Martlebury school, it happened that one of the members for the city, moved by a desire to stimulate the talents of the local youth, or by anxiety to give new lustre to his own waning popularity, offered a prize to the head-master of the grammar-school, to be given to the pupil who should write the best essay on a given subject. Of all the compositions sent in, Arthur Suttaby's was pronounced to be by far the most promising. The prize was given to him, and a paragraph to that effect found its way into all the county papers. That year the midsummer speech-day and prize-giving was invested with special importance. The Mayor was present, as a matter of course, so was the senatorial donor, and so was the accepted candidate on the other side at the next election, who registered a vow during the proceedings that his name should appear as a benefactor in next year's prize-list. Arthur was, in a way, the lion of the day. He was introduced to all the bigwigs, and was soon in conversation with the M.P.'s wife, who assured him that he really must come to town and be a barrister, and write for the papers. Her husband was in the House, and would be delighted to speak a word for him, and editors were wont to be civil to people who had friends in the House. Then the M.P. himself came up, and said it was very warm, almost as warm as it was in the House, and when he rose to speak, was careful to address himself to the Mayor, in the chair, as "sir," and to allude to the head-master as "my honourable friend." Such words as the lady murmured to Arthur were strange to him, and they were very sweet as well; but they would have been much sweeter if he had not been expecting every moment to see his father and mother enter the schoolroom, and make their way to the front places which had been assigned to them as the parents of the successful essayist.

At last they appeared, Mr. Suttaby in a brand-new suit of clothes. His coat seemed bluer, and his waistcoat yellower, and his face redder than ever, in Arthur's eyes. Mrs. Suttaby looked very handsome; but the contrast between her gown, of a fashion thirty years old, and the costumes of the other ladies present was certainly striking. There was a profound silence as the old couple made their way up the room, followed by a murmur of tittering comment, and many of the remarks which reached Arthur's ears

made his heart sink within him and his face burn; but it burnt not, I fear, with honest indignation at the ill-bred jeers which affronted his hearing, but rather because his father came dressed as a rustic into an assembly of provincial town-folk.

Arthur was by this time on the platform, and from there he greeted his parents as they took their seats with a smile and a look; but it was a timid smile and a shifty, furtive look, and not the steady, honest regard of pride and affection which should, at such a time, have glanced from a child's to a parent's eye. After the prize-giving, there was a lunch at the head-master's house, and the great man was full of compliments to Mr. and Mrs. Suttaby on the diligence and acquirements of their son, prophesying great things of him in the future, when he should go up to the University, as, of course, he would. Poor Mrs. Suttaby's head was quite turned with the proud position she had occupied during the day, and she found it difficult to say anything in reply to anybody, except to remark she was sure they were very kind; but her husband, soured and suspicious already, was moody and curt in his speech and manner, for he had tasted the bitter drop in the cup of honour, which seemed that day to be full filled for him and his own. His boy was the hero of the feast; his name would stand as a prize-winner on the schoolroom wall; a pile of handsomely-bound books would lie on the parlour table at Hedgelands; but of what profit would all this be to the old man, seeing that in the course of winning these honours his son had learnt to be ashamed of his father and mother?

During the drive home that evening Mrs. Suttaby could hardly keep silence for five minutes, asking Arthur how ever he had managed to pick up such a lot of learning, and remarking to her husband that it certainly was wonderful. But the boy was shy and reserved, as if conscious of some jarring chord; and from Mr. Suttaby she could extract nothing but monosyllabic replies; so she was forced to fall back upon her own reflections, and these, it is hardly necessary to add, led to the drawing of certain mental pictures of the high estate of the Suttabys when that process of gentleman-making, which had been so auspiciously begun in the case of her son Arthur, should have been duly completed.

"EDELWEISS."

A STORY.

CHAPTER II. AS SHADOWS FALL.

THERE came a long silence after those words. Conrad von Reichenberg was watching the girl as she stood a little distance away from him, her earnest eyes intent upon that distant path where the well-known figure of Hans Krauss would appear.

"For whom are you looking?" asked the young man presently. "A lover?"

She turned her eyes to his in grave rebuke.

"I watch for my father," she answered. "I have no lover. That is what the girls in the village talk about. It is so odd, how they quarrel about Hans, and Fritz, and Friedrich, and Karl; and they are so stupid, all of them!"

He laughed.

"How flattering to Hans, and Fritz, and the rest of their brotherhood! But you could scarcely expect them to be anything but stupid, could you? They are like the cattle, who work all day in the fields, and go to rest at sundown; plodding, honest, industrious, no doubt, but brainless. And so you have no lover. Well, you are young yet. Time will mend that mistake."

His light tone jarred on her. She felt perplexed and disturbed. She looked at the handsome dark face, but the mockery on it disconcerted her.

"You mean that I am stupid, too," she said. "Yes, of course, I know that; only——"

"Only, there are different degrees of stupidity," he interposed. "You are right; but pray don't imagine I had any such unflattering thought of you. Ignorance does not imply stupidity—far from it. Yet it brings more happiness than knowledge does. The more we know, the more we want to know. Yet we never know enough before the book is closed for ever."

"May there not be something more to learn—afterwards?" she said timidly.

Her quick fancy had followed him with ease. To her it always seemed so much easier to think than to speak.

He looked at her in surprise.

"Do the priests tell you that?"

"Oh no; I never speak to them of my fancies. Of course they are old, and full of learning. They would only laugh."

That odd little smile again shadowed the lips of Conrad von Reichenberg.

"You think so? You have not heard

of the wisdom of simplicity, then? A child's questioning has puzzled many a wise head before now. How earnestly you look up that mountain path! Is your father in sight yet?"

"No," she answered, somewhat troubled; "and he said, at sunset. I can't think what delays him."

"He may have gone farther than he intended," said her companion. "Do not be anxious. After all, it is very little past the hour. Has he never broken faith with you?"

"Never," she answered proudly; "nor with anyone. You do not know how good he is."

"I will take your word for it," said the young man lightly. "I wish you would sit down here instead of standing; you will be tired."

"I am never tired," she answered simply, "and it would not be seemly for such as I to sit beside you. You are a gentleman, and I only a peasant."

"What of that?" he said gravely. "You might sit beside me if I ask you."

She shook her head.

"There are many of the great, and rich, and noble who come here to our mountains. My father always says to me: 'Where you can render service do so, but never importune, and never take payment unless you have done something to earn it. Above all, keep your own place, and preserve your own self-respect.' I am only a peasant, mein herr; it is not fitting that I should sit by your side."

"Have you ever read the story of Aschenbrödel?" he asked with a smile in his brown eyes. "She was a kitchen-wench by force of circumstances, yet a prince wedded her. How do you know you are really a peasant?"

"What else could I be?" she asked simply. "Hans Krauss used to tell me when I was little that the fairies had left me in the mountains, but the girls in the village laughed, and so at last I begged him to tell me the truth. It mademe very sad for a time, but it was better I should know."

"Women have a fancy for brushing off illusions," he said curtly as a shadow came over the eyes that were like clear brown waters. "They could not let you rest content with yours. Feminine nature is true to itself, even in a village."

"They are very good to me though," she said with eager championship; "everyone is that. I do not think I could in any way be happier than I am."

"Do you not?" he said, smiling at the

earnest face touched and lightened into a more spiritual beauty by the faint light that lingered in this dusky nook. "I wish you could teach me your secret. Do you really feel that there is nothing more for you to do or to care about in life than to sew and spin, and milk your goats, and gather your wild flowers, and minister to the simple wants of your foster-father?"

"To do—no," she answered. "To care about—well, that is different. I should like to read better, and to know a little more. This railway, for instance; my father and the peasant-folk used to say it was witchcraft and the work of the Evil One, but I have seen the books and the plans, and I know if they can teach men all that they must be wonderful indeed."

"Yes, they are," he said gravely. "All of life that is worth knowing or learning, books can teach you; but after their knowledge comes another, easier to gain, but scarcely so pleasant in the gaining. We call it experience. It is learnt in the school of the world, not among your mountains and valleys, my child."

"I would rather have the books," she said simply.

"A wise choice," he said. "Shall I lend you some? Can you read German, such as I speak?"

"Not very well," she answered diffidently. "You see, at the schools they teach you so little, and then I have not much time for reading. But I would try," she went on eagerly. "My father speaks better German than I. He was in Wien and in Llnz when he was young. He could help me."

"Wien? That is my birthplace," said her companion. "I have not been there for nearly two years, though. I have been travelling about in the interests of my profession."

"What is that?" she asked.

"An engineer," he answered. "That is why I have come to look at this wonderful work here. I am a friend of the chief-inspector."

"And you are a soldier, too, I suppose?"

"Of course—by necessity, not inclination. I should like to have been an artist, but my father opposed the wish. It is not always possible to follow one's own inclination, you know."

He paused abruptly. It struck him as a little odd that he should be talking in this confidential fashion to a little peasant-girl with a childish face and blue eyes.

He drew out his watch.

"I must be making my way to the village," he said. "Shall I see you to-morrow, and bring you the book I promised?"

"If it be not too much trouble, mein herr," she said, colouring brightly.

"It won't be that," he said, laughing. "And now good-night. I hope your vigil won't have to last much longer. I—"

Something cut short his words—a cry from paling lips, a sudden frightened gesture as the girl pointed up the mountain-path, down which a slow and halting procession was slowly approaching.

"Lieber Himmel!" he ejaculated. "What has happened? Is it—is it my father?"

He, too, looked with anxious scrutiny at the slow progress of the group, who seemed to be supporting some helpless burden.

"Don't look so frightened," he said gently. "There has been an accident, doubtless, but it may be only one of the tourists."

She never seemed to hear him. She started off with the speed of a hare. After a moment's hesitation he followed. He saw the pretty, slender figure flash in and out among the shadowy firs. He saw the group halt and part at her approach. He saw her fall on her knees beside the burden they carried, and then he, too, rushed forwards over the rough, narrow path.

"What is it?" he asked the men eagerly.

"He fell down an incline. The ground gave way, they say. His back is broken."

"And who is he?"

"He is my father," sobbed the girl wildly. "My father, and he is dying, they say. Dying! Lieber Gott, what shall I do—what shall I do!"

The piteous, heart-broken appeal thrilled out on the silence with a despair that touched every heart. The young Austrian bent over the prostrate figure. He saw the old man had fainted.

"Perhaps the injuries are not so great," he said gently. "I have some small knowledge of surgery; get him to his cabin, and I will examine him."

The men raised the rough litter they had made. The girl rose to her feet; her sobs seemed frozen, her tears no longer fell. So, slowly and in silence, the little procession moved down the mountain side in the soft June dusk, none speaking or daring to speak of the dread that each heart shared.

When they reached the little cabin they laid him on his bed, and Conrad von Reichenberg tore off the rough shirt and

waistcoat and examined the injuries of the wounded man.

One look was enough. With a shudder he turned away.

"He is dead already," he said softly to the men, so that she, waiting there in the summer dusk, might not hear him.

But the stillness and the silence told her their own tale. She thrust the door open and came forward. They looked at her compassionately.

"Nothing can be done," they said. "You see he was old and heavy, and the fall was a bad one."

She never seemed to hear. She went up and looked at the features in their frozen calm; her warm young hands touched in vain appeal those lifeless, nerveless ones that lay so helpless and unresponsive now.

"Is this death?" she whispered strangely.

"Not three hours back he was with me and spoke to me, and I kissed him; now——"

Then she fell down on her knees with one faint, piteous moan.

"Father—father, I had only you. Oh, come back to me—come back to me!"

CHAPTER III. AWAKING.

THE first touch of sorrow falls with a strange, terrible chill on the young.

The little mountain-maid suffered keenly when she found herself bereft of the tender guardian who had for so long stood to her in the place of all nearer relationship.

The days passed on, but she took no heed of them. A sort of stupor was upon her. She could scarcely realise that she was quite alone—that she must act and think for herself. The friends of Hans Krauss came about her and consoled her, and the old priest told her there would be some little money for her from the sale of the little cabin and its simple furniture, and she listened to them all and thanked them in her grave, simple way, and fell to wondering what she should do now with her solitary life.

It was a Sunday evening when, for the first time since old Hans's death, she walked out and took the little path by the lake-side where she had so often walked with the dead man.

It was a beautiful, still evening; the birds were fluttering amongst the chestnut-boughs. The sky was gold above the far-off mountain-tops; the lovely blue water looked clear as sapphire where it rippled by the little path. Insensibly the girl's heart grew lighter as she drank in the beauty of the scene. She stood quite

still—there under the chestnut-trees—in her simple black gown, and with her fair uncovered head lifted up to the sunlight, and her rapt, soft eyes fixed earnestly on those rosy-tinted clouds that drifted round the golden portals of the day. Perhaps through them the tender heart she loved had passed into some vague unknown world beyond; perhaps a new life had begun for him; perhaps he could see her—watch over her still. So her innocent thoughts ran on, till suddenly a shadow fell across her in the evening light, and a voice broke the spell of silence that had been filled with dreams.

"I am glad to see you out once more," it said. "I hope you are better."

She turned, colouring shyly at the remembered tones.

"I am quite well, I thank you," she said, in her grave, direct way; "and I have not been ill, only very—very unhappy."

The young Austrian saw the change in her face, but it seemed to him as if sorrow had only lent it a rarer charm, and the look in her eyes touched him as nothing had done yet. He could not offer her any commonplace consolation; he felt it would be unworthy of such grief. He stood beside her in silence, and his eyes followed hers to those golden heights where the glory of the day still lingered.

"Will you walk on with me?" he asked her presently. "I should like to speak to you of your future. You are so lonely and unprotected, and perhaps I could serve you in some way. I have so often wished to tell you, but I did not like to intrude upon your grief. Only now——"

"You are very kind to think of me at all," she interposed as he hesitated. "I—I do not know what I shall do. I must live on here, and work——"

Her voice trembled and broke. It was still so new to her to have to think of herself, and for herself.

"It will be best, no doubt," she went on hurriedly. "The neighbours are kind, and I can earn my bread. I am not afraid."

"But do you really wish to stay here? Does this rough, hard life content you?" he asked wonderingly. "It seems to me you are fitted for better things than working in the fields, and tending cattle, and all the coarse, homely cares of a peasant."

She looked up and met his eyes, and a strange trouble seemed to thrill her heart.

How handsome he was, and kind, and how different to the rough-mannered youths of the village!

"One must be content as one is," she answered, with a sigh that belied her words. "What I wish has nothing to do with it."

He would have liked to tell her that it might have a great deal to do with it, but something held him back—some innate sense of chivalry and compassion for the innocent youth, and simple soul that held such beauty of purity.

He walked on beside her in the summer dusk, and some few of the peasants and people of Vitznau meeting them, looked half askance at the girl, and nodded their heads, and muttered to one another that no good could come of it.

Edelweiss noticed nothing of this. She answered their simple greetings in her usual grave and gentle way, and was in no whit proud of the honour of this young aristocrat's companionship. It was kind of him to notice her, to interest himself about her, but she knew how wide a gulf divided him from herself; still, that evening's walk was very pleasant.

He talked to her a great deal. He told her of beautiful cities which had been scarcely known to her even by name; of life in the great world, of art, and wealth, and fame; of himself, too, he told her—of his home, his childhood, his mother's death; his lonely youth, that had been chiefly spent in quaint, pretty Heitzing. Then of his father, and of the beautiful young wife he had lately married, until the young girl grew absorbed in interest, and forgot her recent sorrows and anxieties in listening to this wonderful history.

At last a heavy step came sounding on the path behind them, and a voice called to the girl to stop. She looked back, and saw it was the great rough figure of Franz Brühl, the son of the richest farmer in Vitznau.

"The mother has sent me to bring you back to sup with us," he said in his gruff German patois, and looking at her companion with rude and angry stare.

The girl started and coloured in her shy fashion.

"Your mother is very good," she answered gently. "But I do not wish to come to-night."

He stared at her stupidly, then a curious smile stole round his lips.

"I will tell her you are better employed," he said rudely, and turned away.

The young Austrian looked at the retreating figure, and then at the girl's troubled face. He felt a little amused. This young

boor was her lover, of course, and he was angered and jealous.

"Who is that?" he asked her as they moved on again, through the deepening shadows of the woods.

"He is Franz Brühl," she answered simply. "His people are very rich, so everyone says, but I do not like them much."

"Nor Franz either?" he asked, smiling. "You have offended him, I fear."

"I am sorry," she answered. "But, indeed, I had no wish to go and sup with them to-night. They are so rough and so noisy, and his brothers—they are often rude. My father did not like me to be with them."

"They thought you would be lonely, no doubt, and the invitation was kindly meant," he said. "Do you always answer people in that direct way?"

"I always tell the truth. That is right, is it not?" she said, looking up at his face.

"Yes; and you may tell me the truth now, if you will. Would you rather be walking with me than supping with your friends at the village. Is that why you refused?"

"I would rather be with you—oh, certainly; but I did not refuse the Brühls for that reason only. I have already told you why."

The sun had set now. There was a dull red glow on the mountain heights. In the distant village lights began to twinkle star-like among the dusky trees.

Involuntarily Conrad von Reichenberg paused and looked down at the fair flower-like face by his side. She was so beautiful and so unconscious, and so good and pure. Certainly far too good to be thrown away on a rough boor like Franz Brühl. He lightly touched the little brown hand that hung by her side.

"I am glad you would rather be with me," he said softly. "But Franz is angry, is he not? Perhaps you are unwise to offend him."

"Why?" she asked simply, and drew her hand away, looking up at him with frank, sweet eyes, that yet held the shadow of some dim trouble.

He laughed a little uncomfortably.

"Perhaps he loves you, and would marry you, and then you would have a home, and no need to trouble yourself about the future."

The rosy colour flushed all over her fair face.

"Oh no—no!" she cried eagerly; "I could not—I have never thought of such a

thing. And Franz—oh, I do not like him at all. He is fierce and rude, and he thinks so much of himself because he will have the farm, and the girls of the village all flatter him. But I—oh no, I should never think of him as—as you say."

"You are a foolish little soul," he answered, smiling, but not ill pleased, after all, at the frank confession. "Why are you turning that way—do you wish to go home already?"

"It is getting late," she said rather reluctantly; "I must return now."

"Will you walk here again to-morrow, after sunset?" he asked impulsively. "I will bring you that book we were talking of, if you like. I think you said you could read German?"

"Yes; but not very well," she answered diffidently. "And will you really bring me a book? You are very kind. I—I know I am stupid and ignorant, but indeed I do so wish to learn more, and to know more."

"I will help you if you will let me," he said gently. "I may not be here very much longer, but while I am——"

A momentary compunction cut short his speech. He knew how it might be, and she did not. He saw the pure white page of an innocent, fanciful girlhood lying there at his hand. Should he leave it a blank, or write upon it those letters of fire that are never again to be erased?

As the thought crossed his mind, his eyes met hers in the soft summer dusk. They were so anxious, so pleading, so full of hidden depths of thought, emotion, passion—all that might be as fruit to the flower, as blossom to the bud.

"While I am," he went on hurriedly, "I will teach you whatever you wish."

Her whole face glowed and brightened at his words.

"How can I thank you, sir?" she said.

"Perhaps—some day—I will tell you," he answered; but she, not understanding, was silent.

How happy she felt walking homewards in that enchanted stillness, beneath the dusky boughs and gleaming, silver moon-rays! How happy, even though old Hans was sleeping yonder in the grey shadows of the churchyard, and on all the wide earth she had neither kith nor kin to love or care for her.

Perhaps in all life there is no feeling so exquisite as that sweet, vague happiness which nestles closely, shyly, to the heart, in no way to be expressed or explained, but capable of transfiguring every thought and

emotion, and filling the soul to the very brim with its own sweet, fanciful possession.

Talking gravely, simply, earnestly, frankly, turn by turn, so the two so strangely met and associated went on by the bright lake waters, parting only as they reached the village-street, which was quite deserted now.

That night, as the girl knelt by her bed, and said her simple prayers, she found herself dimly wondering that that dread, cold weight of unhappiness seemed no longer to press its heavy hand upon her heart. Some new hope had sprung to life; some faint gleam of sunlight had fallen across the path that sorrow had left so gloomy and so desolate.

It was with her when her eyes closed in slumber, it was with her still when in the clear, bright dawn she woke to hear the songs of the birds among the boughs, and the lowing of the cattle in the meadows. She rose and opened her little lattice window, and looked away over the dewy fields to where the great mountains lay still wrapped in dim mist. She had not been up there since Hans Krauss died, but she thought she could go this morning, and it would be sweet to feel once more the cool, rich air on those lofty heights, to see the grey, soft shadows melt beneath the sunrays, and feel the old sweet thrill of wonder and delight, as she looked down at the sleeping canton, and tranquil waters far below.

She was soon dressed, and out, and climbing the steep path which led up beside the nearly completed railway. She met no one till half-way up the ascent, and then, with a strange little thrill of anger and dislike, she found herself confronted by Franz Brühl.

"You are up early," he said with a grim smile. "Are you going to meet the fine gentleman who was with you last night?"

She looked up at him, her eyes dark with sudden anger.

"I go to meet no one," she answered curtly, "only to see the sunrise. It seems so long since I have been there," she added sadly, as she looked up towards the Rigi Kulm.

He looked at her closely, then turned as if to bear her company, for she was moving on.

"My mother was vexed you could not come last night," he said presently. "And it is not wise of you to be about so much with the herr engineer. Gentlemen such as he are not fit company for peasant maidens, so my mother says, and so I think too."

"Your mother is very kind to interest herself in what I do," the girl answered proudly. "And yesterday was only the second time I have spoken to the herr. He was so kind to my father. And why should I not speak to him, or let him walk with me, if he wishes? There is nothing wrong in that."

"At present—no," answered Franz moodily. "But if it goes on, one cannot tell. I do not like you to talk so familiarly with strangers."

"You do not like it?" she echoed wonderingly. "What is it to you? You are not my father or my brother, Franz."

"No," he answered in the same sullen way. "Perhaps it would be better if I were. I would tell that fine aristocrat to keep his distance, and not be trying to make honest girls discontented."

The warm indignant colour flushed rosily into the girl's cheeks.

"I am glad you are not my brother," she said hastily. "You are rude, and rough, and unkind. You never did like me to have any pleasure or amusement. I wish you would not mind about me or what I do. There are so many other girls in the village, and they are prettier and well dowered, and they think so much of you. Why do you not go to them?"

He looked at her with a half-stupid, half-admiring glance, and his bronzed face grew a shade paler.

"You know very well I care for none of the village girls," he answered sullenly. "I like you better than any of them, and I will marry you at once, if you will only say yes; and you need not trouble about your future, or work hard as you said you would, and my mother will welcome you, though you are only a nameless child, and can bring no store of linen or dowry of any sort in your hand. But we are well-to-do, and that does not matter, and they know I have set my heart on you, though indeed there is rich Kätchen, the vine-grower's daughter, whom I might have for the asking, and pretty Therese, too, for the matter of that, and—"

"I should advise you, then, to ask them," interrupted Edelweiss indignantly. "I do not like you—no, nor ever did—and I do not wish to marry."

For an instant her companion stood still, and stared at her as if discrediting his senses.

"You—will—not—marry me?" he

jerked out abruptly, and then laughed rudely and long. "Perhaps you think I am not in earnest, but I am. You had better think it over. You will not get such an offer twice," he said at last. "You know you are only a peasant, and have not even a name to call your own. You will have to live by yourself, and work hard for your daily bread, and it is no use letting your head run on books, and fine gentlemen, and such like follies. Everyone knows what that leads to."

He stopped abruptly, for something in the girl's white, indignant face shamed his rough taunts.

"You have forced your company on me," she said. "I did not wish for it, and you have no right to insult me because now I have no one to protect me. I—I cannot help about my name; and has not Father Joseph told us that it is what we do that brings us respect—not what we are. And now I have said all, and I do not wish you to speak to me again. If my father had been alive you would not have dared to offer me such insults; it is cowardly, and I—I hate you! I wish I might never see your face again!"

She broke down into bitter weeping, for anger was rare with her, and her rage and indignation surprised herself. As for Franz, he only stood still and stared at her with lowering brows and angry eyes. Then she turned and fled past him into the woods beyond, and he knew it was useless to follow, or attempt to make peace, until her first feelings of wrath and indignation had spent themselves.

"Hate me!" he muttered to himself as he went down the steep, rough path. "That is his doing. Let him look to himself. I swear he shall never win what he has made me lose!"

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